

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY AMMAN

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S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 AMMAN 4409

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E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PFOR, JO, PLO, SY, MO

SUBJECT: TALK WITH PRIME MINISTER ON MOROCCAN/PLO INITIATIVE

REF: AMMAN 4392

1. SUMMARY. MOROCCANS IN MEETING WITH RIFAI IN LONDON LAST WEEK PUSHED HARD FOR DIRECT JORDANIAN-PLO CONTACTS. PLO WANTS TO RE-ESTABLISH COMMANDO ACTIVITIES IN JORDAN. RIFAI REFUSED TO AGREE. RIFAI AND KING ARE PREPARED TO HAVE A SECRET MEETING WITH PLO'S KHALID EL-HASSAN ON CONDITION THAT PLO KNOWS IN ADVANCE JORDAN WILL NOT SHIFT ITS PRESENT POSITION AGAINST RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF PLO COMMANDO ACTIVITIES FROM EAST BANK AGAINST WEST BANK AND ISRAEL. KING HASSAN PROMISED EXTENSIVE LIBYAN FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR JORDAN IF JORDAN WOULD AGREE. RIFAI REVEALED FULL PROPOSAL TO ASAD WHO HAD PREVIOUSLY BEEN PLO CHANNEL TO JORDAN. RIFAI BELIEVES HE HAS IMPROVED RELATIONS WITH SYRIA AND HELPTED TO POISON SYRIAN RELATIONS WITH PLO. END SUMMARY.

2. FOLLOWED UP WITH PRIME MINISTER MORNING JUNE 30 WITH MORE DETAILED DISCUSSION HIS LONDON TRIP AT REQUEST OF MOROCCANS (REFTEL). HE MET WITH BEN SOUDA WHO TOLD HIM THAT ABU LUTUF (FAROUK QUDDUMI) HAD COME TO KING HASSAN WITH THE REQUEST FOR AID IN MEETING WITH JORDAN. KUDDUMI PROPOSED THAT MOROCCO FACILITATE DIRECT CONTACTS BETWEEN

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JORDAN AND PLO AND IF THIS SUCCESSFUL KHALID EL-HASSAN

(ABU SAID) WOULD COME TO AMMAN TO MEET WITH RIFAI AND HUSSEIN. BEN SOUDA'S ORAL REQUEST WAS ACCOMPANIED BY LONG AND FLATTERING LETTER TO RIFAI FROM KING HASSAN WHICH URGED HIS COOPERATION AND ASSISTANCE TO PLO.

3. SUBSTANCE OF PLO REQUEST WAS TO PERMIT RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF COMMANDO ACTIVITIES IN JORDAN IN ORDER TO ATTACK ISRAEL AND WEST BANK. BEN SOUDA PROPOSED THAT HE AND KHALID EL-HASSAN RETURN IMMEDIATELY WITH RIFAI TO AMMAN AND CARRY ON CONVERSATIONS. KING HASSAN'S LETTER TO RIFAI URGED HIM TO MAKE A POSITIVE DECISION AND USE HIS FULL INFLUENCE TO CONVINCE KING OF CORRECTNESS OF THIS COURSE OF ACTION.

4. RIFAI SAID THAT HE COULD NOT TAKE BEN SOUDA BACK WITH HIM TO JORDAN UNTIL HE HAD RETURNED AND DEVELOPED AN ANSWER HIMSELF. BEN SOUDA INSISTED ON AN IMMEDIATE REPLY TO KING HASSAN'S LETTER TO RIFAI. RIFAI DICTATED A LONG REPLY, THE GIST OF WHICH WAS THAT: (A) ISRAEL TOO STRONG TO PERMIT RESUMPTION OF GUERRILLA ACTIVITIES FROM JORDAN AND JORDAN WOULD BE CRUSHED; (B) JORDAN IS COMMITTED TO COURSE OF PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT AS IS EGYPT AND SYRIA AND ALL THREE BELIEVE THAT SUCH PLO ACTIVITIES WOULD DISRUPT POLITICAL NEGOTIATIONS; (C) IF JORDAN BEGAN CARRYING ON THESE ACTIVITIES, IT WOULD TURN THE JORDAN VALLEY INTO ANOTHER SOUTH LEBANON AND COULD END WITH THE ISRAELIS ON THE HEIGHTS AND WITH AN ARMORED DIVISION AT MAFRAQ OUTFLANKING SYRIA AND CUTTING SEVERAL IMPORTANT TRANSPORTATION ARTERIES FOR THE ARAB WORLD; (D) PLO WAS NOT STRONG ENOUGH TO GET INTO ISRAEL AND THEIR FIGHTERS WOULD ALL BE KILLED; AND (E) JORDAN COULD NOT ESCAPE ANY BLAME BECAUSE HAVING REORIENTED ITS FORCES TOWARD THE VALLEY, ISRAELIS KNOW THAT ANYONE WHO COMES THROUGH MUST DO SO WITH THEIR ACQUIESCENCE OR SUPPORT.

5. RIFAI ALSO EXPLAINED THAT ASAD HAD MADE THE SAME PROPOSALS DURING KING'S APRIL VISIT TO DAMASCUS AND DURING ASAD'S JUNE VISIT TO JORDAN. THE JORDANIAN REPLY HAD BEEN
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THE SAME. ASAD HAD PRESSED HARD AND ASKED IF THERE WAS ANYTHING WHICH COULD BE DONE TO SUPPLY WEAPONS TO LOCAL ARAB FIGHTERS IN THE WEST BANK. RIFAI SAID HE FINALLY AGREED WITH ASAD THAT IF THE SYRIAN ARMY WOULD TURN THE WEAPONS OVER TO THE JORDANIAN ARMY, IN ITS OWN GOOD TIME AND IF IT SO CHOOSE, JORDAN WOULD TRY TO BE HELPFUL. (WHILE THIS GOES SOMEWHAT BEYOND WHAT JORDANIAN POSITION HAS BEEN IN THE PAST,

RIFAI PUT IT TO ME IN A WAY THAT MAKES IT CLEAR THAT THIS WAS A MINIMUM GESTURE TO ASAD AND THAT JORDANIANS WOULD MAINTAIN ABSOLUTE CONTROL OVER THE WEAPONS HERE IN JORDAN FOR FORESEEABLE FUTURE).

6. ON HIS RETURN, RIFAI CONSULTED WITH KING. THEY DECIDED ALMOST IMMEDIATELY THAT RIFAI SHOULD GO TO DAMASCUS SECRETLY AND BRIEF ASAD ON WHAT HAD HAPPENED. IN ADDITION, THEY ALSO DECIDED THAT THEY WOULD BE PREPARED TO ALLOW KHALID EL-HASSAN TO COME TO JORDAN UNDER TWO CONDITIONS: (A) THAT HE COME SECRETLY, AND (B) THAT HE UNDERSTAND IN ADVANCE THAT THE ANSWER HE WOULD RECEIVE FROM THE JORDANIANS WOULD BE THE SAME AS THE ONE PASSED ON THROUGH THE MOROCCANS. RIFAI ADDED AT THIS POINT IN OUR CONVERSATION THAT KING HASSAN HAD ALSO PROMISED THAT IF JORDAN WOULD TAKE THIS POSITION, HE WOULD GUARANTEE THROUGH HIS NEW FRIENDLY RELATIONSHIP WITH QADDAFI, THAT JORDAN WOULD NEVER WANT FOR MONEY FOR ANY PURPOSE.

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7. AS PREVIOUSLY REPORTED, ACCORDING TO RIFAI, ASAD AND KHADDAM WERE BOTH VERY IRRITATED AT ARAFAT'S GOING BEHIND THEIR BACKS. ASAD REPLIED TO RIFAI THAT ON THE POINTS RAISED BY THE PLO THROUGH THE MOROCCANS, HE FULLY SUPPORTED RIFAI'S ANSWER. IN EFFECT, IN THIS SITUATION, SYRIA WAS WITH JORDAN AND NOT WITH THE PLO. IN ADDITION, RIFAI TOLD ME THAT ASAD HAD DELIVERED HIMSELF OF A LONG SERIES OF VERY UNCOMPLIMENTARY REMARKS ABOUT ARAFAT AND

HIS TRICKERY IN TRYING TO SET UP A NEW
KIND OF SEPARATE CHANNEL WITH THE JORDANIANS RATHER
THAN CONTINUING TO WORK THROUGH SYRIA. RIFAI
SAID HE AND THE KING HAVE NO INTEREST IN RESUMING
ANY RELATIONSHIP WITH THE PLO. THEIR ASSESSMENT
IS THAT THE PLO HAD COUNTED GREATLY ON ASAD'S
MAKING SOME PROGRESS FOR THEM WITH JORDAN IN THE
MILITARY AREA, SUCH AS QUDDUMI PROPOSED THROUGH THE
MOROCCANS. WHEN ASAD HAD FAILED, THE PLO BECAME
BOTH IRATE AND DESPERATE AND TRIED TO CREATE A
SECOND CHANNEL OF ACTIVITY IN ORDER TO CIRCUMVENT
WHAT THEY CONSIDERED HAD BECOME A SYRIAN FUGGER OR BLOCKAGE.
RIFAI CONSIDERS THE APPROACH A GOD-GIVEN OPPORTUNITY
FURTHER TO SOLIDIFY JORDANIAN RELATIONS WITH SYRIA
ON THE ONE HAND AND TO DISRUPT AND DISTURB
FURTHER SYRIAN-PLO RELATIONSHIP ON THE OTHER.

8. RIFAI SAID THAT ASAD HAD BEEN PARTICULARLY
VINDICTIVE ABOUT KHALID EL-HASSAN WHO RIFAI
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HAD ALWAYS CONSIDERED A MODERATE. ACCORDING TO
ASAD, IN 1970 HASSAN HAD BEEN AN AGENT FOR THE
IRAQIS WHILE NOW HE WAS AN AGENT FOR THE SAUDIS.
IN 1970 HE CAME TO ASAD AS MINISTER OF DEFENSE
AND PROMISED IRAQI MILITARY SUPPORT IF ASAD COULD
INDUCE PLO TO ATTACK KING HUSSEIN AND ELIMINATE HIM
FROM CONTROL OF JORDAN. ASAD SAID HE REFUSED.
PLO HAD PROCEEDED ON ITS OWN AND SEEN HOW LITTLE
IRAQ WAS PREPARED TO DO TO HELP THEM IN SPITE OF
KHALID EL-HASSAN'S PROMISE.

9. NEXT MOVE IS UP TO PLO WHICH HAS BEEN TOLD THROUGH
MOROCCANS THAT VISIT TO AMMAN CAN COME AT ANY TIME
AFTER TODAY. RIFAI NOTES THAT IT IS INTERESTING
THAT PLO RADIO IN CAIRO FOR THE FIRST TIME IN A
MONTH HAS LAUNCHED A VITRIOLIC ATTACK AGAINST JORDAN.

10. SUGGEST DEPARTMENT REPEAT DAMASCUS AND RABAT.
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